

23RD EACO CONGRESS

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**REPORT OF THE EACO CHAIRMAN ON PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES OF
EACO IN THE LAST TWO YEARS**

(2017-2019)

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1.0 BACKGROUND

It is now two years since the last EACO Congress which was held on 24th -28th July 2017 in Kampala, Uganda. In addition, EACO marks seven years since establishment of its permanent Secretariat in Kigali, Rwanda where it is headquartered.

My gratitude and appreciation go to all the EACO Members, stakeholders and Partners for their continued support and contribution to our organization, which has in the last two years expanded its programmes and network.

I want to specifically thank and commend the Executive Committee (EXCOM), the Secretariat and Working Groups (WGs), which through their joint effort and commitment, have sustained and satisfactorily coordinated the various work and programmes of our organization in the last two years.

As will be reflected later in this report, the organization has also made a notable contribution to the ICT sector in the region and beyond since inception seven years.

In 2018, the Executive Committee of EACO considered and approved a five-year Strategic Plan for the 2018-2023 period to guide the Action Plans and programmes of the Secretariat and the organization in general. I am pleased to note that all EACO members are invited to contribute to the attainment of the strategic objectives of the Strategic Plan.

This report will briefly highlight some of the key activities and programmes in which the organization compromised the achievement of the set organizational goals and objectives.

2.0 EACO' S PROGRAMMES AND KEY ACTIVITIES FOR 2017-2019

2.1 Establishment of Strategic Relationship with the East African Community (EAC)

Since its establishment, EACO has cultivated good relationship with the EAC Secretariat. As a result, EACO, in 2013, was granted an observer status at the EAC.

Furthermore, EACO has also signed a Memorandum with the EAC which underlines key areas for cooperation and collaboration, and which also allows EACO to participate in all EAC meetings and programmes.

Going forward, EACO has initiated the process of seeking its adoption as a semi-autonomous institution of the EAC. This status will enable EACO to escalate its initiatives to the policy makers for consideration and adoption.

To spearhead this process, an *ad hoc* team was set up in 2018, comprising of representatives from the National Regulatory Authorities. The ad hoc team played a key role in the preparation of the EAC concept paper on the establishment of an EAC institution on the Communication sector.

From 24th -28th June, the 16th Meeting of the Sectoral Council on Transport, Communications and Meteorology considered the concept paper and the agenda for the establishment of Communications sector institution of EAC and provided the requisite approval to move to the second stage.

2.2 EACO ICT Capacity Building Programme

As part of its Strategic Plan, the organization continued implementing its capacity building programme, which is intended to develop a critical mass of ICT skills required by the ICT sector and human capacity for its members and stakeholders.

In this regard, the following training were facilitated:

- i. Capacity building Programme for the EXCOM from 10th to 13th December 2018 in Zanzibar, Tanzania
- ii. Workshop on e-waste management organized in collaboration with GIZ, from 12th to 14th December 2018, Nairobi, Kenya.
- iii. Developing core skills for Administrators and Secretaries, organized by International Management Training Consortium (IMTC), in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 19th to 30th November 2019.
- iv. Financial Reporting Standards at International Management Training Consortium (IMCT – Pretoria, South Africa/Dubai) from 7th to 18th January, 2019

- v. Capacity Building Programme for ICT Regulatory work in East Africa organized by Swedish Programme for ICT in Developing Regions (SPIDER) in March 2018, December 2018 and May 2019, in Stockholm, Sweden.
- vi. Workshop on E-Waste Management organized by EACO from 18th to 20th March 2019 in Bujumbura, Burundi.

However, other important planned trainings did not take place due to the lack of participants including the following:

Workshop	Dates	Venue	Remarks
1. New Technologies such as 4G/LTE, OTTS, IOTS	13 th – 17 th May, 2019	Kampala , Uganda	The meeting was postponed due to lack of participants
2. Financial Postal Services in the digital economy	27 th – 31 st May 2019	Mombasa, Kenya	The meeting was postponed due to lack of participants

2.3 EACO Preparations for WRC-19 and Frequency Coordination in East Africa

As you are aware, the World Radiocommunication Conferences (WRC) are convened every four years under the facilitation of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Typically, the WRC reviews the Radio Regulation, the international treaty governing the use of the radio-frequency spectrum and the geostationary-satellite and non-geostationary-satellite orbits, and where necessary, revises the Regulations.

WRC-19 is scheduled to take place this year from 28th October to 22 November 2019 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

In preparation for this important meeting, EACO has held the following meetings:

- i. Meeting in Dakar Senegal: 10th September 2017,
- ii. Meeting and workshop in Juba, South Sudan: 14th -18th May 2018
- iii. Online meeting: 12th-13thSeptember 2018
- iv. Meeting in Arusha: 3th–4thDecember 2018
- v. Online meeting: 30thJanuary 2019
- vi. Meeting in Dar es Salaam: 3rd -5th June 2019
- vii. Joint meeting with SADC: 6th -7th June 2019

During the afore-cited meetings, EACO members deliberated on the WRC-19 Agenda Items and subsequently established preliminary common regional positions on each of the items.

These positions were presented at the ATU WG meeting held in Gaborone Botswana 17th – 21st June 2019.

EACO positions will be further presented to the next ATU African Preparatory Meeting for scheduled to take place in August 2019 and subsequently to the ITU before the conference.

2.4 Cross border frequency coordination for Mobile and Broadcasting Services

During the 22nd Congress held on 28th July 2017 in Kampala, Uganda, operators and regulators were urged to address the cross-border frequency interference problem.

In this regard, members resolved to develop a framework to help mitigate the frequency interferences and forced roaming at the border locations. A frame-work was developed in 2017. I am pleased to report that cross-border coordination for mobile was implemented during the 2017-2018 FY. Verification exercises have since commenced, with a view to ensuring that the problem is resolved once and for all. It was found out that the problem has been mitigated but in some cases it still exists.

Consideration for the cross-border parameters for FM was undertaken during the FY 2018-2019. Member states agreed on the parameters for use at the border location. The status is as follows:

No.	Border	Status
1	Tanzania- Kenya	Completed
2	Rwanda Burundi	Completed
3	Rwanda-Tanzania	pending
4	Rwanda -Uganda	pending
5	Uganda- Kenya	pending
6	Uganda- Tanzania	pending

2.5 EACO Databank Project

One of EACO's key objectives is promoting integration through harmonization of ICT policies in the EAC region. To attain this objective, there is need to have a reliable source of data and enhanced data processing which will guide the planning for ICT development and performance in the region

The project will provide performance measurements and growth trends for the Communications sector in the EAC region. This database will also be used to provide information on ICT in the region to EACO members and its stakeholders in the EAC region and globally. The project is known as the EACO databank project.

A project team made up of eight representatives from National Regulatory Agencies of member states and EACO secretariat is coordinating this project.

The implementation of the project shall include the deployment of system to manage the data base as well as the review of harmonized indicators.

I am pleased to report that the tender process for the procurement of the consultant to implement the databank was completed on 3rd May 2019. The selected consultants, Knowledge Capita, signed the contract with EACO on 7th June 2019.

2.6 EACO CubeSat Project

The EACO CubeSat project is in line with EACO 2018-2023 strategic plan under the pillar of "Promotion and Development of regional communications sector programs and

projects” and strategic objective on the “Development of an EACO CubeSat”. The development of the CubeSat is therefore part and parcel of the 2018/2019 action plan.

The EACO CubeSat Project aims to bring together the six (6) countries in the East Africa region to establish a regional CubeSat(s) to among other things support rural connectivity and broadcasting services in the region. A regional CubeSat will without doubt benefit from economies of scale.

2.7 Postal Sector Development Initiatives

During the period under review, Working Group 4 on Postal Services Development and Regulation continued to coordinate and follow up on the implementation of decisions of regional and international postal organizations, namely PAPU and UPU.

The following are some of the initiatives geared towards the sector development which have been coordinated by EACO during the last two years:

(a) Development of Harmonised National Addressing System in East Africa

Following a study carried out by the UPU Consultant in support of EACO in 2016, a number of countries within the EAC have embarked on the process of implementing the study recommendations and already in the process of establishing National Addressing System and Postcodes.

It is noteworthy that individual projects across the region are at different stages of implementation. The projects are beset by a number of challenges, most serious of which is inadequate funding. To overcome these challenges and close the prevailing gaps, the intervention of governments is considered mandatory.

(b) Draft EAC Postal Development Strategy

EACO through WG4 and its members continued participating in the EAC technical Committee. In this regard, some stakeholders participated in the development of the draft EAC Postal Development Strategy during meetings organized by the EAC Secretariat for partner states. The last meeting of the technical committee meeting was held in Nairobi in October 2018. The strategy is in the process of consideration and validation by the Sectoral Council on Transport, Communications and Meteorology (TCM) of EAC.

2.8 EACO's Programme for establishing Harmonized Sustainable E-Waste Management System in East Africa

Following EACO's programme of establishing National E-Waste Steering Committees in all the EAC member States, the organization established a regional EACO E-waste Management Steering Committee comprising two representatives from each of the National E-Waste Steering Committees.

During the period under review, EACO through the WG7 on E-Waste and Counterfeit Gadgets Management and the afore-cited Steering Committees organized three workshops: in Kampala-Uganda in July 2017, in Kigali- Rwanda in May 2018 and in Bujumbura-Burundi in March 2019.

The workshops were aimed at:

- a) Creating a multi-stakeholder awareness forum on the e-waste management challenges in the East African region.
- b) Facilitating interaction and sharing of experiences on sustainable e-waste management best practices and initiatives.
- c) Initiating a process for development of a harmonized sustainable e-waste management system for the East African region
- d) Validating the Regional E-Waste Strategy.
- e)

2.9 Broadcasting Services Development

Under broadcasting development, the following initiatives were completed:

- i. Harmonised quality of service parameters for terrestrial digital broadcasting
- ii. Regulatory framework document for "MUST CARRY" channels and the licensing of subscription services on all platforms

2.10 EACO's collaboration and Partnerships with its Stakeholders

During the two years under review, EACO continued to consolidate its relationship and collaboration with the following organizations:

- East African Community
- International Telecommunication Union
- Universal Postal Union
- Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization
- International Telecommunications Satellite Organization
- African Union Commission
- Internet Society
- Ericsson
- AFRALTI
- Multimedia University of Kenya
- PAPU
- ATU
- Swedish Programme for ICT in Developing Regions (SPIDER) tenable at the University of Stockholm
- SIDA
- GSMA
- SMART Africa
- Access Partnership
- APC

The scope of EACO's collaboration/ partnership with these organizations involved:

- (i) Capacity Building initiatives
- (ii) Provision of technical or financial support
- (iii) Sharing of Information
- (iv) Participation in each other's programmes
- (v) Organisation of Joint events/ workshops/ Seminars.

The collaboration and partnerships with the above organizations has not only contributed towards the expansion of EACO's programmes but has enhanced its image and visibility.

During the period under review, EACO created new collaborations and partnerships with a number of organizations, some of which culminated in the signing of MoUs to carry out collaborative projects and activities of mutual interests. The most notable included: GSMA for capacity building and co-organising ICT events; SPIDER for capacity building programs, ISOC for collaboration in the data bank project and the peering and interconnection fora; Multimedia; University of Kenya (MMU) for conducting training courses; CRASA for conducting projects and programs of mutual interests including preparation of common positions at WRC; ReMEDIA for e-waste management and University of Dodoma (Tanzania) for Research and Development.

2.11 Harmonization and coordination of the implementation of ICT Policy and Regulatory Frameworks in EAC

Through the Working Groups, EACO has created multi-stakeholder forums for dialogue on a number of emerging ICT issues and as a result facilitated collaboration among key sector players.

In this regard, the Secretariat in conjunction with the EACO Working Groups continued contributing towards the development of ICT policy and regulatory frameworks. In

addition, EACO also undertook harmonization work in the region by developing a number of policy guidelines and frameworks that are at different stages of implementation. We had an opportunity to hear the progress reports, which were presented during the Assemblies meetings.

3. EACO'S SECRETARIAT AND PERFORMANCE

3.1 EACO Secretariat

It is now five years since a permanent Secretariat of EACO was established in Kigali, Rwanda. The Secretariat has continued with its role of coordinating EACO's programmes and following up implementation of the decisions of the Executive Committees and Congress.

During the period under review, the organization continued enhancing the institutional capacity of its Secretariat by putting in place and implementing the following operational policies, systems and procedures:

- i) Human Resources Manual
- ii) Staff Performance Appraisal System
- iii) Financial Rules & Regulations
- iv) EACO Accounting Policy

The above policies contributed to the improved efficiency and effectiveness of EACO.

3.2 Recruitment of New Liaison Managers of EACO

The employment contracts for the incumbent Liaison Managers ended on 31st August 2018. To ensure a smooth transition, the 21st Executive Committee meeting which was held on 26th March 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya, directed the Secretariat to start the recruitment process to fill the positions. On 3rd April 2018 EACO advised member countries to advertise the vacant positions of: Liaison Manager Regulatory Affairs, Liaison Manager ICT Affairs and Liaison Manager Human Resources & Administration.

This exercise was conducted in line with the agreed upon recruitment schedule and timelines from 17th to 19th January, 2018 meeting of LHRC. Subsequently, special EXCOM meetings were held on 5th July 2018 and 29th August 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya, in order to conduct interviews for the recruitment of new Liaison Managers.

It is important to note that three Liaison Manager have been recruited from Burundi, Kenya and Uganda.

3.3 EACO's Audited Financial Statements for the financial years 2016/17 and 2017/18.

EACO's Annual Accounts for 2016/17 and 2017/18 were audited and the Audited Financial Statements for 2016/17 and 2017/18 shall be tabled for consideration and adoption by this session of Congress.

4 CHALLENGES

Although the organization has made some major strides and accomplishments in the last two years, this has not been without challenges. Some of the major challenges of the organization include:

- a) Inadequate resources to adequately finance EACO's programmes and projects.
- b) Over dependence on membership contributions as the major source of revenue and the growing size of account receivables brought about by non-payment of annual contributions by a majority of members.
- c) Low participation by telecom and broadcasting operators in the work of Working Groups.
- d) Lack of a legal framework for monitoring implementation and enforcement of compliance with EACO decisions at national and EAC level.
- e) Inadequate visibility, linkage and collaboration with the ICT policy makers and political leadership in the East African region.

- f) Inadequate broadband infrastructure and cross-border connectivity within East Africa.
- g) Delay in finalising the EAC Postal Development Strategy and lack of a harmonised addressing system and postal codes which affects delivery of postal services in the region.
- h) Lack of adequate local content which impacts on the demand and uptake of ICT services.
- i) Increasing e-waste volumes and inadequate environmentally sound e-waste management systems at national and regional level, thus posing a threat to human health and the environment.
- j) High cost of bandwidth which affects levels of access and uptake of broadband services/Internet in the region.
- k) Lack of commitment and participation of EACO members in working groups and committees' meetings.

5 CONCLUSION

EACO has in the last two years built its institutional capacity and managed to position itself in the region and internationally as a key player and contributor to the development of the regional and global ICT sector.

EACO continued establishing a wider network and new partnership with its regional and international stakeholders, which has resulted in support to its programmes.

I wish to thank members of EACO especially the National ICT Regulators for their commitment and substantial support to EACO and its programmes.

Special thanks and recognition go to the Government of Rwanda and RURA for the support provided to the EACO Secretariat in the last two years.

I thank you for your attention.

Francis Wangusi
Chairman of EACO